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America's 'Superspook': At Work in a Lion's Den

By Lee Lescaze

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Four months after becoming President Carter's second choice to head the nation's intelligence community, Adm. Stansfield Turner has emerged as one of the men closest to the President.

"He's next to the Georgia Mafia and Mondale," one source said.

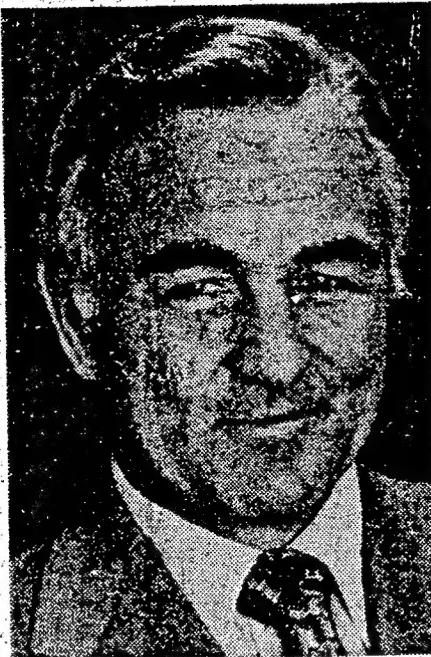
"His relations with Carter couldn't be better," Mondale said. "The President admires him greatly."

Although Carter and Turner were Annapolis classmates, their relationship has been molded since Turner was selected. They knew each other only slightly at the Naval Academy and had met once after graduation.

One man who has watched the President and Turner said: "Carter trusts him. He knows Turner's being honest and that he's loyal."

The admiral, who chose to remain a Navy officer while running the intelligence community, is the first Central Intelligence Agency director to attend Cabinet meetings regularly and he has two weekly meetings with the President—usually on Tuesdays and Fridays. Mondale and White House national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski are the only other regular participants in these meetings.

Turner learns his brief for these meetings very well, according to men who have listened to him. "I spend the last couple of hours before that briefing preparing for it. It's a very important thing and you have to



ADM. STANFIELD TURNER

"I think we've got a product to sell" spend your time going over your material getting the last facts," Turner said in an interview.

"I think we've got to be salesmen," Turner said. "I think we've got a product to sell and we've got to get out on the street and sell it."

The White House and Cabinet agencies are Turner's most important customers; but he also has asked how he can aid congressional committees and he has sought to run a somewhat more open agency.

There are a lot of subjects Turner won't discuss in an interview, ranging from CIA use of the Hughes Glomar Explorer ship to details of his proposals for reshaping the intelligence community.

But, he explains, the reason a reporter is sitting across from him and that TV cameras have been allowed to film in parts of CIA headquarters is his desire to refurbish the image, to sell the product.

Consumers in the White House, in the Defense and State departments and on Capitol Hill respond "bright" and "hard-working" when asked about Turner.

"It's clear he's made every effort to understand the intelligence community as a whole. He's worked at that very hard," said one consumer.

But while the 53-year-old admiral has won praise outside the intelligence community, he has taken some shots from CIA veterans.

"It's a very unhappy, uncertain place," one long-time CIA employee remarked. He questions whether Turner has the intellectual depth for his job.

Turner's defenders reply that the grumbling against him comes from an old-boy network that objects to some of his management techniques.

Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) said it is too soon to evaluate Turner's overall performance, but doesn't take the expressions of unhappiness with the new director very seriously.

"He's working in a pretty sophisticated lion's den," Hart said.

The critics insist Turner has limited their access to him and they object to many of the "T-grams" he sends around the huge CIA headquarters from his seventh-floor office.

T-grams are short memos asking for information, which, the critics say, interrupt their more important work and threaten to clog channels of communication with streams of documents of little importance.

Turner's Operation Outreach effort to open the spy agency to the public and the press a little more than in the past has also nettled some CIA career officials. For example, a brief Turner memo suggesting the agency explore escorting tour groups through its headquarters quickly leaked to the press, presumably from someone who thought the idea could be ridiculed off the drawing board.

Last week, in what appeared to be preparation for a retreat on the tourists, Turner stressed that nothing had been decided.

He strongly denied, however, the major criticisms that have been leveled at him.

Turner has six Navy men working for him at the CIA, he said, three of them in key positions close to his office.

"If these three people have isolated me from the entire establishment out-

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here, I want to give them a lot of credit because that's a pretty clever act," Turner said.

He noted that he had a staff of six around his office, half the size of the immediate staff outside the office of his deputy director, Henry Knoche.

"I've got a telephone there with 17 buttons on it," Turner said, pointing across his office, "any one of the key people is on that system and all he's got to do is press the button and I'm on the other end."

Turner sees nothing wrong in having brought his son, Navy Lt. Geoffrey Turner, over to work at the CIA for four months. His son had time between Navy assignments and is a career intelligence officer, Turner said.

"It's a heck of a lot of fun for me to go home on the weekends and sit down and compare notes," Turner said. It cost the government nothing and his son doesn't work in Turner's office, but "down in the bowels some place," he said.

Paperwork is not clogged, Turner said, in dealing with another charge. Except for lengthy, non-urgent memoranda, he returns an answer to almost all papers reaching him within 24 hours, he said.

"What has annoyed them," Turner acknowledged, is his desire for written memos as substitutes for what would have been oral briefings in the past.

"I read faster than you people talk," Turner said he told his subordinates when he took over the CIA. "Anybody reads faster than people talk."

Turner believes in short memos because, he says, "if people can't put it down in writing they haven't thought it out."

"I don't have the time to do all this on a personal basis," Turner said, particularly because he has a mandate from Carter to spend more time wearing his hat as director of the entire intelligence community and planning its reorganization.

Turner is advocating greater centralization of the community with a very strong overall director. The major counter argument comes from the Pentagon, which wants to retain its present control over electronic methods of gathering information.

"He's in the driver's seat at a very

crucial time," one official said of Turner, who says one of his goals is to set the right priorities for the intelligence community's next decade.

On the controversial topic of outside experts being consulted to obtain views that may contrast with those of CIA analysts, Turner said he and his chief assistant for intelligence estimates, Robert Bowie, are in the process of forming a team of advisers.

Turner said these advisers would not be all of one ideological stripe, nor would all of them be consulted on each problem.

Rather, three or four would be asked to work with the CIA team undertaking a special project. The outsiders would be selected to bolster the CIA team wherever it was weakest, Turner said.

The admiral said outsiders have been consulted twice already during his administration of the CIA, but not on a formal basis.

After the CIA published its prediction that the Soviet Union and Eastern European nations would become net oil importers by 1985, a number of people disputed its conclusion.

Turner said he wrote to many of them asking for their criticisms and then inviting them to come down to CIA headquarters for a day of discussions.

Three university professors were consulted more recently on the CIA's recently completed report on the Soviet economy, Turner said.

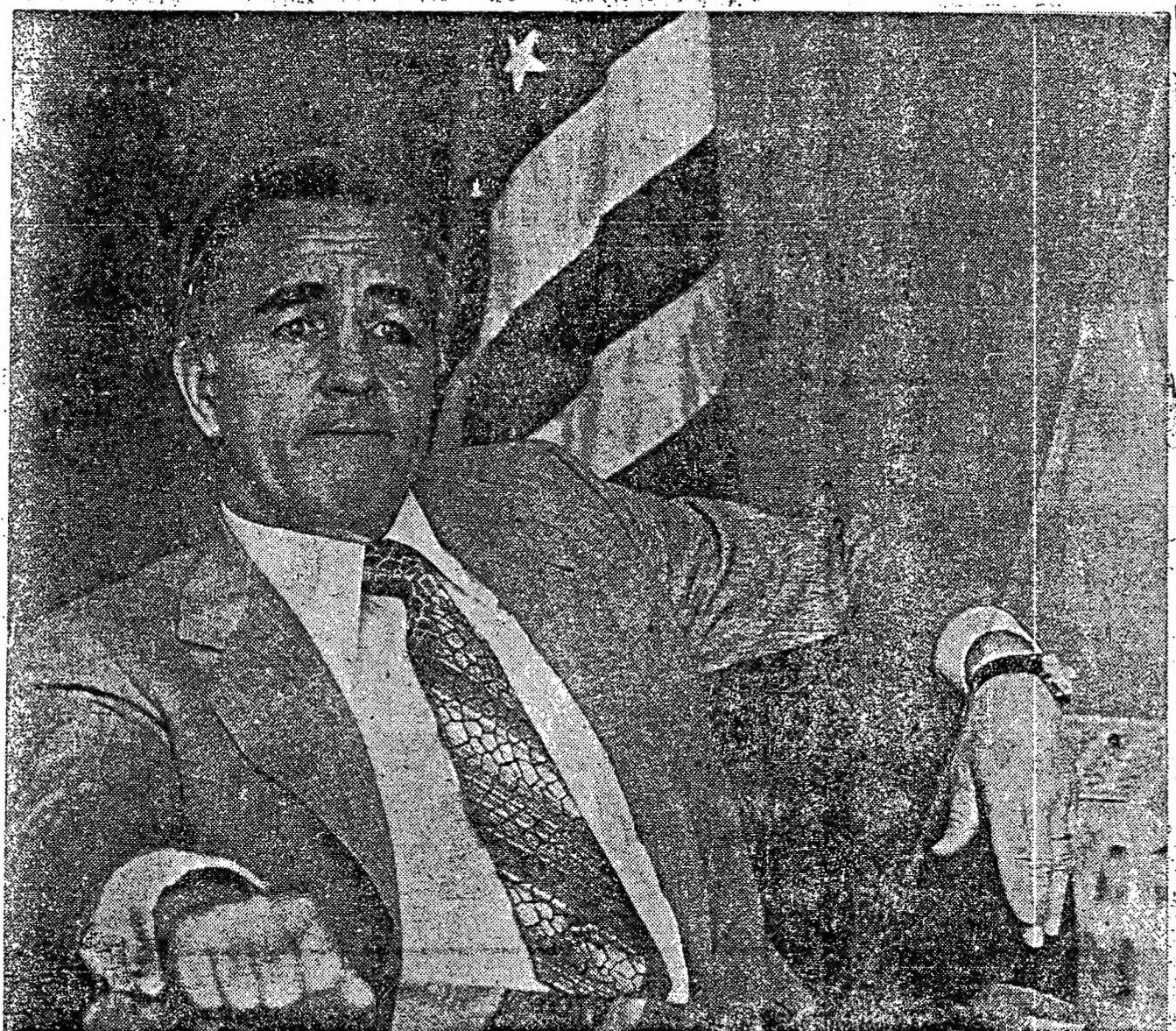
Turner says he likes his job and dismisses another charge leveled against him privately by some and in a column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak: That he wants to use it as a way station before becoming chief of naval operations or chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

His presence is commanding and his straight back reminds visitors that he is a military man. Turner operates from an office in which nothing is out of place. Indeed, there are almost no papers or objects on table and desk tops.

Turner has added one personal touch: a carved wood sign sent him by a friend that he has attached to his private bathroom's door.

It reads: "Superspook".

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By Ellsworth Davis—The Washington Post

"He's in the driver's seat at a very crucial time," an official said of Turner, head of the intelligence community.